



Chairman Tom Cole

*Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**FY 2018 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill
Full Committee Markup
July 19, 2017
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. This morning we will consider a bill funding the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies in fiscal year 2018. I am pleased to chair this Subcommittee and to provide support for important programs that touch the lives of every American.

While our lower allocation this year has forced us to make difficult decisions, I want to remind my colleagues that the cuts we are making today amount to barely 3 percent of what we had to spend last year and is essentially what we spent in fiscal year 2016. And -- the money this subcommittee gave up helped the Congress to fund a needed increase in spending on veterans -- an increase that I know everyone on this Committee supported.

The bill before us today focuses on key national priorities -- investing in biomedical research, to find cures for diseases like Alzheimer's and cancer; ensuring our country is fully prepared and able to protect our citizens from disease outbreaks or bioterrorism; continuing to support early childhood education, particularly for those at-risk; helping first-generation college students prepare for, access and complete a postsecondary education; and continuing to support people living with disabilities. The bill also preserves funding for popular programs like career and technical education, support to our Historically Black Colleges and Universities, programs to help Native Americans, the AmeriCorps program, LIHEAP, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

It does so in a fiscally responsible way, by living within the agreed-upon budget caps and by eliminating low-priority or unauthorized programs in order to fund high-priority activities that benefit all Americans.

The National Institutes of Health, our Nation's premier biomedical research agency, is funded at \$1.1 billion above last year. NIH is working to find cures for Alzheimer's disease, cancer and develop the next generation of medical treatment through the use of precision medicine techniques. We need to continue to build upon the \$2 billion increase provided in the omnibus last year. I view the mark we set forth today as a floor -- not a ceiling -- for biomedical research funding and I am hopeful that this number can increase as the process moves forward.

Biodefense and preparedness programs, including new funding to prevent a pandemic flu from occurring, are increased across the bill.

We're all aware of the terrible toll that prescription drug and opioid abuse is taking on our nation. I'm proud to say this bill includes another \$500 million to continue comprehensive grants program to enable states, localities and tribes to develop anti-opioid initiatives focused on prevention, education, treatment and recovery services, as outlined in the 21st Century Cures Act.

Head Start receives a \$22 million increase in this bill. Preschool programs are continued at \$250 million, and Child Care programs receive a \$4 million increase. Special education programs for students with disabilities are increased by \$200 million, which will help local school districts ease the financial burden of providing specialized educational services. TRIO and GEARUP, which help disadvantaged students prepare for and complete college, receive increases of \$60 million and \$10 million, respectively, over last year.

The bill also includes \$500 million for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program. These funds can be used flexibly by school districts across the country, whether the need is in the area of counseling, computer science instruction or teacher training and arts programming.

Pell grants are maintained in the bill at a maximum grant of \$5,920 per student. The bill also protects the most vulnerable of our Nation's people by continuing community services programs, the low-income home energy assistance program, Meals on Wheels, job training programs and programs supporting Native Americans, veterans and people living with disabilities.

These increases, and the preservation of other programs, would not have been possible without a generous allocation from our full committee Chairman, Rodney Frelinghuysen, who faced a challenging non-defense discretionary number and the difficult task of recommending allocations across subcommittees. I think he did a remarkable job of balancing priorities and I want to thank him.

I will also note that this is an initial allocation, the beginning of the Congressional funding process. I am always ready to negotiate with our friends in the Senate and on the other side of the aisle. I will be looking for opportunities to enhance our priorities, plug holes and work together across the aisle and the rotunda as we continue down the path of fiscal year 2018. Frankly it is my belief that at the end of the legislative process, we will have a product that will win the majority of both Democrats and Republicans, as was the case with the FY16 and FY17 bills.

Finally, I want to note that the bill protects human life by continuing long-standing prohibitions against federal tax dollars being used to pay for abortions, and including new provisions that will ensure that no tax dollars are used for research on human fetal tissue obtained from an abortion.

In closing, of course, in addition to thanking my chairman, I also want to thank the ranking members of the both the full and subcommittees, Nita Lowey and Rosa DeLauro, my fellow subcommittee members and the staff -- Susan Ross, Jennifer Cama, Justin Gibbons, Kathryn Salmon and Lori Bias on my staff and Stephen Steigleder and Robin Juliano on the Democrat staff -- for the hard work that has resulted in the bill before us today.

I'm proud of the bill I present to you today. It represents a balanced approach that will benefit every American and maintain appropriate stewardship of taxpayer dollars we have been entrusted with as Members of Congress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

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